

BALLET TODAY

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NOVEMBER 1951

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PETER REVITT'S

BALLET GUYED

with a foreword by MARY CLARKE

is a book of brilliant caricatures of the leading dancers of the day. Peter Revitt's work needs no introduction to readers of "BALLET TODAY" and his genius for the witty comment in line is here crystallised in 36 dazzling sketches including Margot Fonteyn, Moira Shearer, Beryl Grey, Michael Somes, Violetta Elvin, Alexander Grant.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE article on page 4 gives you a first impression by our Editor, P. W. Manchester, of dance activities in New York. Important parties were given to welcome Miss Manchester by Arthur Todd (New York correspondent of *Ballet Today*) and by the Editors of *Dance News* (for which paper she is working as Guest Associate Editor). The photographs on page 5 of this issue record these events and show you some of the distinguished people who attended them.

FOOTBALL BALLET

The London Ballet Circle's first film show at the Caxton Hall on September 25th was disappointing in that the two promised French films of Tcherina were delayed in transit and could not be shown. However, the programme did contain a film of three international dances made during a youth rally in Berlin in 1951 that was sufficiently exciting to excuse any change of programme. This film contained a "football ballet" performed by a Soviet folk dance group that was so hilarious and so brilliantly danced that the whole audience broke into spontaneous cheers at the end. The idea of conveying a game in dancing is not new but I have never seen it used more ingeniously or performed with such zest as in this film. This enormously expressive use of dancing in simple folk dance styles was also, of course, apparent in the programmes given by the Yugoslav Dancers at the Royal Festival Hall; their *Warriors' Dance* for two men and a drummer was more powerful than many a lavishly staged scene in ballet. I feel there is a lesson to be learned here, or a moral to be drawn. It must be something to do with economy of gesture, simplicity of means and force of projection.

MRINALINI SARABHAI

The recent seasons of ballet and Spanish dancing at the Cambridge Theatre have decidedly put that theatre "on the map" for London audiences interested in dancing. The policy continues in November when Mrinalini Sarabhai and her Indian dancers will appear there. Madame Sarabhai's last London season (at the St. Martin's Theatre) will be remembered with great pleasure by all who saw it and we are most happy to welcome her back to London. For dance presentations of this size the Cambridge stage is almost ideal although it is less suitable for the larger-scale organisations, such as the Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas which appeared there in October.

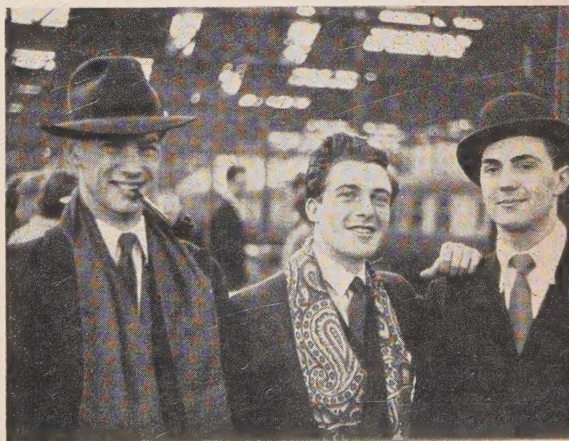
SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

The Sadler's Wells Ballet will be back at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, on November 21st and will be presenting the new Massine ballet *Donald of the Burthens* on December 12th, with Beryl Grey and Alexander Grant in the leading roles. We all hope that this new work with its Scottish setting may provide the company with the stimulus it so sorely needs. It gives us no pleasure to print harsh criticism of the company but it is impossible to ignore the fact that during the last couple of seasons they have given us more disappointment than pleasure.

ORIGINAL BALLET Russe

I have no words in which to express the despair felt by many prewar balletomanes who journeyed to Wimbledon to see the "Original Ballet Russe". I would personally prefer to see all the magnificent old backcloths and costumes dropped into the sea than to watch them being used in this fashion. M. C.

MAURICE METLISS, DONALD BRITTON AND MICHAEL HOGAN OF THE
SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE BALLET PHOTOGRAPHED ON THEIR
DEPARTURE FOR NORTH AMERICA BY PAUL WILSON



A LETTER FROM NEW YORK

Sent by P. W. MANCHESTER

IN a crowded three weeks since I arrived on August 27th, I have managed to see not only most of the performances given by New York City Ballet during their early autumn season but have spent a weekend at Jacob's Pillow, seen *The King and I*, one of the smash hit musicals, and been to Radio City Music Hall where the world-famed Rockettes cavort four times daily.

Seeing *The King and I* was entirely due to some smart finesse on the part of Arthur Todd, because any big New York success is booked solid for months ahead. However, see it we did and it is an absolutely enchanting show with a radiant performance by Gertrude Lawrence and a vivid one by Yul Brynner. The reason I mention it here is because it contains a ballet by Jerome Robbins which I am not at all sure is not the best new ballet I have seen since I arrived, since no work of art can do more than reach perfection in its particular sphere. *The Small House of Uncle Thomas* is the Eliza on the Ice episode from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as it would have been seen through the eyes of dancers at the Siamese Court of the same period, namely the early 1860's. It manages to be beautiful, funny and touching all at one and the same time, and the choreography is a remarkably skilful pastiche of genuine Siamese dancing. I would give all the *Cages* and *Ages of Anxiety* present and to come for this *Small House*.

The pattern of Ballet in New York (I do not presume to say America) is beginning to sort itself out but I shall need to have seen the season of Ballet Theatre at the Metropolitan Opera House which begins on September 20th before I shall feel qualified to make any public pronouncements about views I am already starting to formulate. I can say this for certain; that to watch a year of Ballet and Modern Dance in this country is going to be even more interesting and illuminating than I had thought.

One thing is already clear. New York City Ballet has developed enormously since we saw it in London and there is no doubt at all that it is fast becoming an important company. It is extraordinarily strong in first class *danseuses*—any company that can show Maria Tallchief, Nora Kaye, Melissa Hayden, Janet Reed, Tanaquil LeClercq (though she unfortunately was absent this season due to a sprained ankle), Diana Adams, Patricia Wilde and Yvonne Mounsey really has something to boast about, though it is unfortunately true that neither Nora Kaye nor Diana Adams has much to do in the repertoire. On the male side the situation is far less happy. Hugh

Laing is in much the same position as Kaye and Adams though his dramatic intensity is a great help in *Illuminations* which otherwise I find as intolerable here as I did in London. Eglevsky tears the roof off in *pas de trois* and *pas de deux* but this cannot make him look like a member of the company. Michael Maule is deservedly on his way up; otherwise the picture is as before.

The new work of the season, *The Miraculous Mandarin* is a shocker in more senses than one. Since it is unlikely to survive the season there is no point in saying much about it here as Arthur Todd has written about it. On the other hand, *Cakewalk* which had its première during the June season is the kind of American ballet that London loves.

I was unlucky over the programme at Jacob's Pillow which happened not to be a very interesting one that weekend. I did see José Limón but the two items he presented were neither of them especially striking, an opinion which I found was confirmed by others who saw them so I am not going to take them as being typical of American Modern Dance. Limón is a striking personality, and I look forward to seeing some of his concert appearances later. The wooden theatre at Jacob's Pillow is beautiful and the whole project is a fascinating one. I met some students who obviously felt that their summer there had been of great benefit to them as artists. Ted Shawn himself is a most impressive person to meet, and I shall always remember that it was in his beautiful New England home that I stood on my first American porch.

Visiting Radio City Music Hall is something everyone has to do at least once. I can only say that it makes the Gaumont State Cinema at Kilburn look quite cosy. The Rockettes may have been off form the day I went, but I found them considerably less precise than London's Empire Girls though certainly there are twelve more of them. The ballet was pretty bad even for this kind of show and the audience seemed unimpressed which was heartening.

I shall have much more to say later on about everything I see here. With Ballet Theatre at the Met. and New York City Ballet back at the City Center in November there is going to be as little respite as we normally get in London.

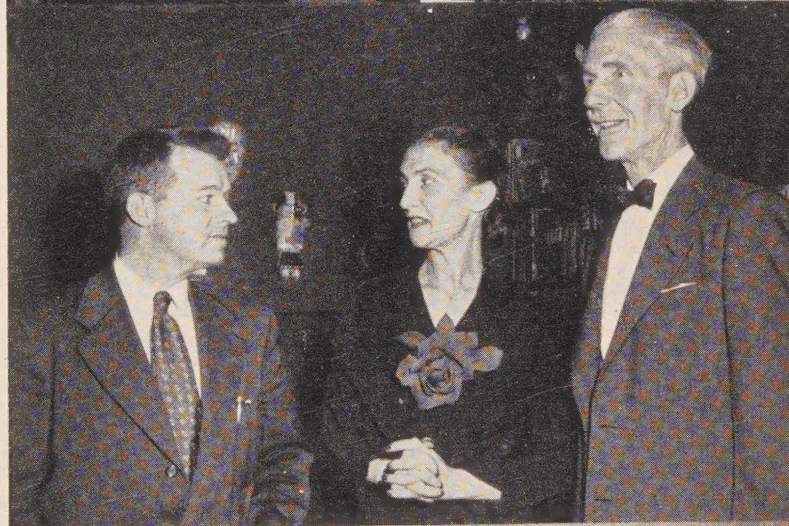
The Paul Wilson photograph on the cover is of Nadia Nerina of the Sadler's Wells Ballet as Swanilda in Coppelia.

P. W. MANCHESTER TALKING TO AMERICAN BALLERINAS NORA MAYE AND MARIA TALLCHIEF AT THE PARTY GIVEN BY ARTHUR TODD TO WELCOME HER IN NEW YORK



Photograph by Jack Mitchell

TWO DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN CRITICS, WALTER TERRY OF THE NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE (LEFT), AND JOHN MARTIN OF THE NEW YORK TIMES ALSO ATTENDED ARTHUR TODD'S PARTY AND WELCOMED P. W. MANCHESTER TO THEIR RANKS.



Photograph by Jack Mitchell

THE EDITORS OF DANCE NEWS STAGED THEIR WELCOMING PARTY AT THE STUDIO OF TATIANA CHAMIE. AMONG THOSE WHO ATTENDED WERE IGOR YOUSKEVITCH, ALEXANDRA DANILOVA AND ANDRE EGLEVSKY, HERE SEEN CHATTING COSILY IN A CORNER — IN RUSSIAN, NO DOUBT



Photograph by Walter E. Owen

ANYBODY CAN TRY ANYTHING

By MARY CLARKE

THE September season at Covent Garden by the Sadler's Wells Ballet was, with very few exceptions, a lamentable affair. All the inertia of the previous season was apparent, little attempt had been made to improve performances of the standard repertoire and, of course, Margot Fonteyn was resting a strained foot and did not appear at all. Add to this the fact that the season clashed directly with the Theatre Ballet's farewell season at Sadler's Wells and you will not be amazed that there were empty seats at Covent Garden on many occasions.

Fonteyn's absence always seems to undermine this company. It may be that they need her for inspiration or that they feel incomplete without her, but performances always seem to decline a little when she is away and what might be exhilarating becomes commonplace. This season, too, the company was without several valuable soloists who have recently left and there were many new little faces in the *corps de ballet*. In addition there was much illness or indisposition among the dancers—and Dame Ninette de Valois was undoubtedly worried and busy with last-minute arrangements for the Theatre Ballet's American tour.

But can these circumstances really extenuate the casting policies that went on in September? Typical was the case of a relatively inexperienced soloist who was expected to come to terms with the difficult, majestic *Ballet Imperial*, and also with the peasant *pas de deux* (reinserted into *Giselle*) on the very same evening.

With their long tradition, large company and relatively small repertoire it should surely be possible for Sadler's Wells to re-cast their ballets without subjecting us to the continual affronts of gross unsuitability that characterised this season. It seems to me that things might be improved if each dancer appeared in fewer roles and spent more time in perfecting them instead of being rushed on to try something else. I would also enjoy a little more adventure in casting and a little less reliance on the established soloist just because she learns quickly and is always "reliable". The criterion during September, 1951, seemed to be plain competence in order to win any part in the repertoire—and anything less interesting on the stage than the merely competent dancer I have yet to discover.

This major complaint voiced, let us turn to the actual performance details.

No new ballets were given, but Petit's *Ballabile* and Ashton's *Scènes de Ballet* were restored to the

repertoire and both exhibited lasting qualities that made their reappearance welcome. *Scènes de Ballet* is by far the better ballet choreographically, but *Ballabile* wins hands down in the matter of décor and has an insouciance that is both disarming and charming. Margaret Dale stepped easily into the Anne Negus comedy role, though she was missed in her own original vivid part of the *Equestrienne*.

Scènes de Ballet was well rehearsed and beautifully danced, especially by the boys (the boys did far better than the girls throughout the season). I did not feel Nadia Nerina was quite ready for the ballerina role from the point of view of style and projection, but she danced with most attractive clarity and precision.

Coppelia was also revived, for Shearer and Nerina. The Covent Garden production of this ballet is so routine and so hideous decoratively that it has lost all the charm it once had in the days of the Vic-Wells Ballet. Nerina, again, danced well, but as yet has had little opportunity to develop the character of Swanilda. She possesses both the gaiety necessary for the first act and a gentle authority which will, in time, fit her for the formal *pas de deux* of the last act. Her dancing improves steadily although her arms are still somewhat stiff and inexpressive. Considering the number of new roles Nerina has had to master within the last few months, however, it is not surprising that she is still feeling her way in most of them. Frederick Ashton is now appearing as Dr. Coppélius and is a most sympathetic and lovable character. John Hart partners excellently as Franz, but he tends to over-play the comedy.

The other big revival of the season was *Giselle* with considerable improvements in scenery and costumes by James Bailey as well as alterations in the production. Whether on account of fault-finding by the American press last year or of the example of Festival Ballet's beautiful version at home, or even—dare one suggest?—of Mr. Beaumont's patient criticisms and suggestions, the ballet has at last been overhauled and at least some discrepancies removed. The grape harvest is now made plain*, for instance, and *Giselle* is duly, if a little perfunctorily, crowned Queen of the Vintage. Albrecht's disguise is indicated clearly and a squire other than Wilfrid conducts the hunting

*All too plain: I doubt if two strong men could in reality lift the baskets that the girls so carelessly tuck under their arms when they begin to dance.

party to Giselle's cottage. The peasant *pas de deux* has been reintroduced as an entertainment for the Duke and Bathilde (thus, presumably, giving Giselle and her mother a chance to tidy up the cottage and put a duster round before inviting the distinguished visitors inside). I cannot rouse much interest in this little divertissement with its tinkly music (I believe Constant Lambert always opposed its inclusion) and it certainly holds up the action. However, if it is to remain it would be more convincing if danced directly towards the Duke, with fewer exits behind the trees, and with at least a show of interest if not some actual applause from the hunting party. It is nice to have some peasant boys in Act I, and it would be nicer still if they were allowed to join in the dance.

In Act II Giselle's first appearance from the grave is well contrived, but there is very little magic or mystery about her disappearance. Hilarion's death is very unconvincing and I do think the Wilis might take a little more pleasure in their malefactions.

Giselle was danced by Moira Shearer and by Violetta Elvin who made her début in this ballet on September 15th. Shearer has improved her performance immensely and has simplified her style a great

deal. She has obviously thought a great deal about the character, and I liked particularly the hypnotic trance she assumed in Act II when forced to dance by Myrtha.

While Shearer's performance at the moment represents an achievement of conscious artistry, Elvin's as yet tentative performance is quite the reverse. She is blessed with all the natural attributes for a Giselle in the great tradition, and needs only time, careful instruction and rehearsal to give us something superb. Already she has moments of high tragedy such as when she realises the damning truth of Bathilde's engagement and when she pleads with Myrtha for Albrecht's life. Her dancing is very good academically with a soft legato quality and great beauty of extension, but it does not yet suggest the correct period style. Like Hamlets, however, Giselles should never be judged by their first performances; it will be what Elvin makes of the role over the next year or so that will count.

Both ballerinas were partnered by Alexis Rassiné who did much better than ever before, but is still unable to make a very important figure of Albrecht. Although it was not a performance to which the press was invited, I feel I must mention the remarkable impression made by young Kenneth Melville as Albrecht at the last matinée of the season. Under-rehearsed, full of immaturities and inexperience, he nevertheless had about him an air of "the real thing" that was astonishing. For the present I will simply state that he knows how to walk upon the stage as a personage—a craft which few dancers ever learn.

Two other performances of the season that I was grateful for were by Pamela May—as the Red Queen in *Checkmate* and as a gloriously bawdy, blowzy Dancer in *The Rake's Progress*. It was good to have Beryl Grey back and to see Philip Chatfield as the raw, uncouth Dorkon in *Daphnis and Chloe*. Franklin White is extraordinarily good as Hilarion in *Giselle*. For the rest, a charitable silence.

Ballet by Paul Gnatt

The Danish dancer Paul Gnatt, who is now a member of the Original Ballet Russe, is working on the choreography for a new ballet which will be presented by the company in the near future. The projected ballet has five scenes and will take some forty-five minutes in performance. Gnatt describes the theme as being based on 'the ideology of world government'. The music is by Henry Herchmann, an Austrian pianist-composer, and Gnatt—who teaches music theory in Denmark—has orchestrated it himself.

VIOLETTA ELVIN IN THE FIRST ACT SOLO OF GISELLE

Photograph by Paul Wilson



THE BALLET ESPAGNOL OF PILAR LOPEZ

By IVOR GUEST

SINCE that overcast Sunday afternoon in December when Dolores de Pedroso-Sturdza gave her lecture on Spanish dancing on the stage of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London has been subjected to a welcome invasion of dancers from the Iberian peninsula. It has indeed been a revelation to see, within so short a period of time, such fine exponents of Spanish dancing as Antonio, José Greco, Pilar López and La Quica (to list them strictly alphabetically). The first London seasons of Antonio (who had been seen before at the Edinburgh Festival) and of José Greco and La Quica (who had both demonstrated for the lecture at Covent Garden), coincided, by an unfortunate mischance, in June and July. At the end of July, at the invitation of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, Dolores de Pedroso-Sturdza gave two lectures, with demonstrations by Alberto Portillo and María Fernanda Montes, during the Society's annual congress. Now, in the first weeks of September, we have with us the Ballet Espagnol of Pilar López and the Salamanca and Córdoba Groups of the Juventudes.

In this Festival year—the centenary of the Great Exhibition—the fashion is to draw parallels with 1851, and it is interesting to recall that there was then also a Spanish invasion, although on a smaller scale, for that year marked the first London appearance of the famous Spanish dancer, Petra Cámara.

We are here concerned with the Ballet Espagnol of Pilar López, which commenced its first London season at the Cambridge Theatre on September 6th. Pilar López is the sister of the late La Argentinita (Encarnación López), and her company includes, besides herself, Roberto Ximénez, Manolo Vargas, Alberto Lorca, Alejandro Vega, Elvira Real, Dorita Ruiz, Rosario Escudero and Pilar Calvo. The guitarist was Luis Maravilla, the *cantaor* Ramon de Loja, and the orchestra conducted by José M. Franco.

One senses, while watching this fine company, the long unbroken thread of tradition that has preserved so many dances of different types—folk, classical, flamenco—that go to make up the wealth that is Spanish dancing. Pilar López herself is a queen among dancers: there is majesty in her carriage, and dignity and grace in her every movement. Whatever she does is enhanced by a comprehension and a polish which mark her as a complete artist.

That she is continuing the work of Argentinita was apparent from the first number of the first pro-

gramme, *Pepita Jiménez*, which was arranged by Pilar López in memory of her sister. Argentinita was very fond of this music by Albéniz, and urged her sister to compose a dance to it. Pilar López tried, but inspiration eluded her. Some years later, she made another attempt, but still the dance would not come. Then, after her sister's death, the idea came to her fully formed, and the result was the creation of this deeply moving tribute.

The emphasis of the Ballet Espagnol's programme arrangement was less on flamenco dancing than Londoners might have expected from recent experience. *Flamencos de la Trinidad* introduced the *Caña*, a form of *cante grande*, with its suggestion of Gregorian plainchant breaking into the melody of the song; and *Viván los Cabales* was the frame for *Soleares* and the exhilarating, characteristic rhythm of the *Seguidilla Gitana*.

There were two impressive displays of *zapateado*, the first to the violin solo by Sarasate, in which Vega and Lorca exhibited their virtuosity in unison.

PILAR LOPEZ AND ROBERTO XIMENEZ

Photograph by Paul Wilson



and the second, the *Zapateado del Perchel*, danced by Ximénez. This latter dance was most effectively staged. As the music began, the light dimmed until the guitarist was bathed in a soft red glow and a spotlight concentrated on the feet of the dancer. His figure upright, yet not stiff, his hands clasping his jacket, Ximénez began to tap out the intricate rhythms with his heels and soles. The modulation was so perfect that one was spellbound and could have watched and listened for much longer than the brief period allotted to this dance and its encore. Ximénez himself is one of the favourite pupils of the great Estampío, from whom he learnt this particular dance. This master, incidentally, has taught several other members of the company, including Manolo Vargas. Now an old man, living in the mountains for his health, he yet retains his lithe figure and cat-like movements, and his feet can still execute his fabulous *zapateado* with the precision and clarity of little hammers.

Classical Spanish dancing is represented by several charming numbers. Pilar López dances a delightful *Bolero de Doña Francisquita*, from Vives' operetta, *Zarzuela*, in which her feet trace intricate patterns with wonderful delicacy. Elvira Real and Dorita Ruiz performed two eighteenth-century *danzas boleras*, the *Seguidillas Manchegas* and the *Panaderos*, in the latter of which they were joined by Alberto Lorca. This type of dance suits Lorca's stage presence and his style, with its high elevation and strong *batterie*, as he proved conclusively in his two solos, the bolero *Puerta de Tierra* and *Alborada del Gracioso*.

Folklore is the basis of other dances. The *Escenas Castellanas* is already an established favourite in London. More interesting were the suite of Basque dances and the Peruvian *Huayno*. Among the curious features of the Basque dances are the affinity of many of the steps to those of classical ballet and the holding of the arms still by the sides, which adds greatly to the difficulty of execution. The *Huayno* is an Inca dance arranged by Argentinita, giving a charming impression of the Peruvian Indians, drowsy from the narcotic effect of the coca bean, treating one another with characteristic shyness.

The repertory of the Ballet Espagnol is strengthened by several longer works, such as Ravel's *Bolero*, a superb version of *Capricho Español*, and *Fantasia Goyesca*, a series of scenes inspired by the art of Goya and played to the music of Granados. How subtly, in this last work, does the mood of the dancing change, from the stateliness of the *Majos y Duquesas*, to the playfulness of the young men in *Jugando al Toro* and *La Vendimia*, the nightmarish atmosphere of *Los Caprichos* (*y se la llevaron*), and



PETRA CAMARA

finally the joyful abandon of the *Jotas Aragonesa y Valenciana*, upon which the curtain descends!

The most important work in the repertory is *La Zapatera y el Embozado*, a ballet by Alberto Torres, with music by Jesus G. Lehoz and choreography by Pilar López. Spanish ballet, as distinguished from Spanish dancing, is still in its infancy: although La Nena was presenting series of dances connected by a thread of plot about a hundred years ago, Spanish choreographers are still experimenting, and it would be unjust to judge their works by standards which are applied to classical ballet with its centuries-old tradition. *La Zapatera y el Embozado* is inspired by the work of the poet, García Lorca, who was killed during the Civil War, and introduces the *Zorongo Gitano* which he wrote for Argentinita. The ballet is a little too long, but contains some moments of real inspiration, such as the use of castanets to convey the gossiping of women.

In the *Danza del Chivato*, magnificently rendered with fire and feeling by Manolo Vargas, one had a glimpse of another ballet by Pilar López, *La Rómeria de los Cornudos*. This is a ballet originally arranged for Danilova and Franklin, and banned in Spain on account of its plot, which tells of a fountain whose waters are supposed to have fertilising qualities. It

was a pity that the programme notes did not give the context of this dance, in which Chivato is expressing his feelings after finding himself cuckolded—for the secret of the fountain lay not in its magic waters but in a virile stranger from the neighbouring village.

There may still be many problems to be solved

GHOSTS OF THE FABULOUS By PAUL TASSOVIN

THE late Colonel Vassili Vosresinsky, one time commander of a Cossack regiment, must have found his tactical knowledge of inestimable value when later as Colonel de Basil he set himself the task of marshalling a troupe of ballet dancers round the world. His campaigns in the field of ballet art were wondrously successful. One remembers with nostalgic joy some magnificent occasions during the 'thirties, but the world upheavals of recent years brought his troupe to its tired knees.

After long expeditions in South America during the war years de Basil reappeared with his combinations in New York in 1946 to win a "battle of ballets", but later in Europe economic crises finally brought his troupe to its Waterloo. Like a true soldier, however, de Basil never considered himself beaten; his was the kind of mentality that thrived on troubles and difficulties and he was ever planning that his ballet even if dead should not lie down; that it would, like Lazarus, get up on its toes again.

In the midst of organising the present resurrection the Colonel himself departed this life, but being as ever a man of foresight he appointed a successor upon whom to shed his mantle and bestow his confidence.

Mr. George Kirsta, the Colonel's successor, is a stylish designer, but I doubt if he is as shrewd and intuitive as Vassili Vosresinsky; and even if he were, he is faced with virtually changing the course of history. De Basil carried on his shoulders an astute business head and, above all, in his best years he was artistically favoured by having the creative genius of Fokine, Massine and Balanchine allied to a group of outstanding dancers.

Mr. Kirsta has Grigoriev to reassemble the new corps and mount the new repertoire—but what can Grigoriev do without the nucleus of brilliant talent which long ago was shed? He cannot make bricks without straw.

The reappearance of the "Original Ballet Russe" at Wimbledon during the first week of October was a sad affair to say the least. The ballets looked so shabby, the sets so poorly hung on a stage several times too small for such works; they were literally

but the work of Pilar López which we have seen before Spanish ballet reaches its full development, certainly indicates the right road to be taken to weld the fabulous riches of Spanish dancing into a unified mode of dance-expression. May she leave us with a desire soon to return, and may the parting be brief.

crammed on, everybody fighting bravely. There seemed little attempt at production; all the niceties, the subtleties, the atmospheres were lost in the scrimmage. The lighting was flat and undistinguished and helped not a jot.

Doubtless Mr. Kirsta's motives in carrying on this tired campaign are of the purest, but is it wise to dig up memories? We cannot go back to the 'thirties, when this company was fresh and full of glamorous promise; we can only go forward from the present. Nobody can bring back the dispersed elements of the original Ballet Russe; the babies have grown up and gone their ways, the choreographers are working elsewhere. Nobody can bring back the spirit, the fresh spontaneous joy, the glory of a past epoch.

The publicity claims that these relics of ballets, some of them masterpieces in their time, are worth one hundred thousand pounds. But where is the substance of this extravagant claim? What is worth £100,000? — the costumes, the half forgotten choreographies, the musical scores? Beautifully performed as a work of art a ballet cannot be assessed in terms of money. Inadequately performed such ballets are only a mockery of yesteryear, not worth sixpence.

My words may sound harsh, but is it feasible to try and revive Russian Ballet without Russian dancers? Where is the dignity, the spirit, the grandeur of the great Russian school? I cannot find these qualities in the present ensemble.

Like empires, ballet companies rise and fall. They grow big and strong, they rise supreme, become the fashionable rage; then time rolls on, they become enfeebled, and crumble with age. The inevitable cycle occurs.

Given a company of young dancers and potential artists, would it not be better to use them for what they themselves are worth? Create something appertaining to their characters and abilities, something new, something relevant to our time? Give us the ballet of the future by all means, Mr. Kirsta, but please do not persist in trying to make the novices of today interpret Russian Ballet, when they have barely a clue about the substance or the style, or the tradition of that great art.

MEET PEARL PRIMUS

By ARTHUR TODD

PEARL PRIMUS, an extraordinary American dancer who recently spent a year in Africa rediscovering her native roots, makes her London concert début this month at the Princes Theatre, under the auspices of Jack Hylton. Talking of this long-anticipated event, Pearl Primus says: "I am thrilled beyond words with the idea of coming to England and I am so happy that I shall finally be dancing in London." After the London season she will tour in Europe and Israel and on her return to America will undertake a coast-to-coast tour of a magnitude approximating the tours of the major ballet companies.

British audiences will be doubly fortunate in seeing Pearl Primus because she is not only "just about the greatest dancer of her race" (as *Life* magazine described her) but is also one of the finest young modern dancers in America, having studied with both Charles Weidman and Martha Graham early in her career. Pearl Primus' technical range is broader than that of any other American-Negro dancer and her subject matter is considerably more extensive since it encompasses African and West Indian themes, spirituals, folk songs, blues and jazz as well as other strictly American material.

London will find that Pearl Primus is neither decorative nor sophisticated in her approach nor does she glamorise her material. Her forte is force and her movement has often been said to be like that of a primitive panther, full of power and grace. Quite wisely, Miss Primus has never swamped her stage with distracting decor, nor is she dependent on magnificent costumes—although she does have some stunning ones. As she contends, "Since the body is the instrument by which we are speaking, and each part has so much to say, I have found no need for elaborate scenery and costumes. Lighting, too, is as important as the simplicity of the costumes and the music—it is the framework."

British audiences will doubtless find the African section of the Primus programme one of the most exciting and powerful. Like any other real artist, however, Miss Primus has taken this rich native material and re-created it for the concert stage. As she explains this, "I have to take the language of the African and translate it into a language that can be understood here. I am not reproducing what I saw but what I feel." This is especially true of *Initiation* which was premiered in New York last January and reviewed in the March issue of *Ballet Today*.

Speaking of *Initiation* Pearl Primus observes, "In

the jungle, one of the basic physical elements of initiation is fear. When a person passes through this initiation, he has conquered his fear and is ready to pick up his tools and build a new life. Failure to pass an initiation in the jungle is death. I feel that we go through some similar kind of initiation every day—when we stretch out our hand, when we leave home, when we choose a job. Any phase that we step out of—at that point we are starting an initiation—and it could last for a split second or a year. But man cannot live with fear if he is to be alive and grow. Taking this idea, I created *Initiation* all over again, employing any and all movements that came to me naturally." This piece is no longer just a depiction of a tribal ritual and, like Martha Graham's *Errand Into The Maze*, it is universal in its implications of a creature doing battle with fear.

Another African dance that may be widely popular in London and elsewhere is *The Impinyuza*, which will feature the four male dancers that are appearing with Pearl Primus. Based on a dance of the Watusi (this tribe appeared in the motion pictures *King Solomon's Mines* and *Savage Splendour*) the dancers represent the Ishyaka, the Batwa *corps de ballet* of the King of the giant Watusi and they dance the

PEARL PRIMUS IN ONE OF HER COMEDY DANCES



elegance, the invincibility and the beauty of their monarch. The Primus programme also includes some stirring West Indian material, and this phase is perhaps best exemplified by *Santos*, which illustrates the conflict between the old civilization of Africa against that of the Western hemisphere.

These African dances have had a wonderful critical and audience reception in America and there has been a wide public interest in these works because of Miss Primus' recent African journeys. This safari came about as the result of her commission by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation to do a year's dance study, filming and recording in Africa. During her visit, she made exhaustive studies of more than thirty major tribal groups in the Gold Coast, Nigeria, the Cameroons, the Belgian Congo, French Equatorial Africa, Angola, the Ivory Coast, Liberia and Senegal. While in Liberia, she was presented with the "Star of Africa," a medal of honour bestowed upon her by the Liberian government. When she returned home, she brought with her trunk loads of rare African jewellery and fabulous fabrics and costumes, also an extremely valuable collection of sketches, photographs, films and recordings to preserve her studies. Indeed, one can only hope that while she is in London Miss Primus can find the time to address some of the dance organisations and clubs on her findings in Africa and elsewhere.

The Spirituals are another group of dances on the Primus concert programme that will be certain to find favour in London. These spirituals are the songs which helped carry the Negro people in America through their slavery and today they are termed as America's great folk music.

Still another rich facet of the Primus concert schedule are the dances of the American Southland. These include one of her greatest solos, *Strange Fruit*, dealing with a lynching, and another, *Hard Times Blues*, which is a protest against the conditions which create share-cropping. A third is *Take This Hammer*, a song of the chain gangs.

Though many of the dances that Pearl Primus is performing in London are serious and dramatic, it would obviously be unfair to overlook her gay and lilted comedy numbers. One of the most charming of these is *Study in Nothing* in which she "reacts to a note struck and engages in trying to find it in space." Equally infectious is her delightful duet with a male partner, *Mischievous Interlude*. In these dances and others like them, Miss Primus fairly brims over with effervescence and abandon, providing a striking contrast to her more sober compositions.

Intellectually, Pearl Primus' career seems as distinguished and varied as her concert range. She majored in biology at Hunter College, New York,

and she is now working on a Ph.D. at Colombia University. She has lectured widely and Macmillan is shortly publishing her book on her travels. Pearl Primus was also cited as "Woman of the Year" for her dance achievements by the National Council of Negro Women in America. She is a fine teacher—patient, thorough and untiring—and she has achieved some really remarkable results in the training of her professional dancers. She has also appeared in the theatre (*Show Boat*), on television and in night clubs with success. Perhaps one of the reasons why she can hold such varied audiences enthralled is that she has never cheapened her art nor has she made any compromises.

Before she left for Africa, Pearl Primus had the respect, interest and support of the American dance field at large and when she returned to us we found her even more magnificent and further enriched both spiritually and artistically. We all hope that she will triumph in Britain, Europe and Israel as she has in America.

Miss Primus actually made her début in this country at the Royal Command Performance on October 29th, two days before her season at the Princes Theatre opened on October 31st.

MARY ELLEN MOYLAN OF THE AMERICAN NATIONAL BALLET
THEATRE IN SWAN LAKE

Photograph by Walter E. Owen



NOVERRE, HILFERDING, ANGIOLINI

By FERDINAND REYNA

IMAGINATION has played a large part in the history of the dance as written to date, and the revolutionary period of the art of ballet, at the end of the 18th century, when ballet became an independent art in itself, freed from speech and song, has given rise to many false and erroneous interpretations. Ballet historians have a great deal to say about the school of Paris and Georges Noverre, without taking into account what was happening at that time in Venice, Vienna and St. Petersburg. In a history of the ballet recently published in Paris, we read that "the first ballet without words, *Les Caprices de Galathée*, was presented by Noverre in 1776 at the Paris Opera". The writer continues, "Georges Noverre was the creator of the independent dance entertainment, with no declamatory background".

Now, if we want to form a truly historic idea of the facts, without being content merely to copy what others have written before, we must conclude that Noverre was *not* the reformer of ballet. What he did was to assimilate, with genius, the ideas of others. In fact, when Noverre published his famous "Letters on Dancing and the Ballet" in Lyons in 1760, the reform of ballet had already taken place.

To deal with the facts in order, it is strange to see that then, as now, the move towards expressionist mime in dancing began in Central Europe, home in our own times of the expressionist schools of Laban and Mary Wigman. Perhaps the Germans have recourse to pantomime because they cannot dance, at least in the way we understand it. Perhaps our classical dancing needs too much temperament, lightness and grace.

And it was precisely in Central Europe (at the beginning of the 18th century) that the movement towards danced mime started which led to the reform of ballet.

The Hilferding family played a part in the history of the German theatre from the 17th century on. Joseph Hilferding is mentioned in 1685 as being an actor at Salzburg, then at Vienna, where he founded a theatre of comedy where plays were presented until 1706. He died leaving two sons. One of them, Peter, acted Pantaloon in the troupe of Eckenburg, the famous acrobat, actor and impresario. The Hilferdings never settled down; Peter was working at Königsberg in 1736 and, the year after, he went to St. Petersburg where he popularised the German

theatre. Frederick the Great made him a privileged court actor, forcing him to remain in Prussia. Peter Hilferding made use of all styles—balletic, tragic, lyrical. But he became bankrupt and returned to Russia in 1743, opening a theatre at St. Petersburg. Thence he went to Moscow. In 1769 he was still acting, at Riga, where it is supposed that he died.

His brother, who also went under the stage name of von Wewen, was born in Vienna in 1710. An educated man and a painter, he wanted to be a dancer, and was sent to Paris to the famous teacher, Blondy, at the expense of the Imperial school. Back in Vienna in 1737 he was appointed Court Ballet master. He wore both wig and mask when dancing, but already felt a spirit of revolt against the dance as taught in Paris, with its grotesques and comedians, its pantaloons, harlequins, pierrots and so on. When the Emperor Charles VI died he had time to perfect his reforms and staged his first ballet-pantomime in which Pulcinellas and Columbines were replaced by real-life characters—colliers, Tyrolean and Hungarian peasants in national costume dancing movements used in their work. All these ballets had a slender plot adapted to the customs and dress of these characters. Hilferding also did away with the conventional costumes for allegorical and imaginary characters. He also reformed lighting and invented ballets in colours—blue, green, pink, and so on. These were still only disconnected sketches, but Hilferding was encouraged by them to evolve his ideas into a mimed plot with theme, development and conclusion. He soon gained mastery over this form and presented Racine's *Brutannicus*, in 1740, without words but with the most scrupulous attention to the rules of drama. He also presented *Idoménée* by Crebillon and Voltaire's *l'Alzir*. In 1752 he created, among other works, *Psyche*, *le Force de Sang*, *l'Enlèvement de Proserpine*, *Circe* and *Pygmalion*.

Then he went to Stuttgart to the court of Charles Eugene of Wurtemberg. It was not until 1760 that Noverre became *maître de ballet* at the same court; certainly at Venice, where there were 18 theatres permanently open at the time, there was no need to wait for Noverre to create the *ballet d'action*. Vincenzo Galeotti, *maître de ballet* and choreographer, had created at about the same time *Les Bergers et la Fée*, *La Foire d'Amsterdam* and other works, before leaving for Copenhagen in 1775 where he remained until his death in 1816. His successor was Bournonville. In 1757 Elizabeth I summoned Hilferding to

Russia, where he had been preceded by the Italian companies of Rinaldi Fossan, or Fusano, and Locatelli. The first had presented at the Hermitage Theatre in 1744 a ballet of flowers, which was a real story-ballet with argument, development and conclusion.

On the 1st of August, 1759, Hilferding presented in Russia a "ballet-drama" in 5 acts, with a story by Soumakorov and music by Raupach. I will not list all the other ballets created by Hilferding in Russia before he left Petersburg for Vienna in 1765. He opened the Karntnerthor theatre where he created more ballets, on original texts from the most famous dramatists; for he was a great connoisseur of the theatre. He died in Vienna in 1768.

Mention must now be made of the Florentine Gasparo Angiolini who was born in 1731 (Noverre was born in Paris in 1727) of a family of dancers and actors. He quickly became proficient in music and dancing and left Italy. For ten years he worked, waiting for his opportunity, when he was summoned to replace Hilferding, whose disciple he had been, as director of the Imperial theatre in Vienna. He also began to present 'national' dances, in conformance with the habits, costumes and characteristics of the countries concerned. In 1761 he presented a ballet-pantomime, *Don Juan*, and, in 1762, *Cythère assiégé*, with book by Favart and music by Gluck. Encouraged by his success Angiolini created, in succession, *Semiramis* (taken from the tragedy by Voltaire), *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Theseus in Crete*, *La Chasse de Henri IV*, *Armide*, *Le Cid*, etc.

When Angiolini was summoned to replace Hilferding in Russia as he had replaced him in Vienna, he had a tremendous success there with his *Dido Abandoned*, after the tragedy by the Italian poet Metastasio, presented at the Imperial Theatre of St. Petersburg in 1760. From the congratulatory letter which the poet wrote to Angiolini after the premiere, it can be seen that his ballet pantomimes were in fact re-synthesised extracts from the tragedy and not a mimed repetition of the entire work.

"For forty years", wrote Metastasio to Angiolini, "my poor Dido has been crying her lament in all the theatres of Europe and not one of your colleagues has been able to make as admirable a use of it as you have done in your incomparable ballet-pantomime".

That being said, a few dates will suffice to show how Noverre has usurped the glory of being the reformer of the ballet, a glory he claims in his letters. There can be no juggling with dates. Hilferding was in full elaboration of his ballet-pantomimes when Noverre was an unimportant dancer in Paris. He

went to Stuttgart when Hilferding was already on his way to St. Petersburg.

The reform of ballet was a European fact and not the work of one man. But in his letters Noverre speaks only of himself, of his ideas and principles. To listen to him one would think that it was he who had invented the story ballet. He also shows himself as very narrow-minded, recognising only one theatre in the world, the Paris Opera, and he declares that, as far as theatrical machines are concerned, the Italians do not count. But we know very well that the Italians were the great masters of theatrical machinery. And Noverre does not even mention Hilferding, of whom he must have heard in Germany!

Evidently, when Noverre published his letters he was an embittered man. For, while Hilferding and Angiolini were presenting their ballets on the imperial stages of Vienna and St. Petersburg and at the Scala, Milan, the doors of the Opera were firmly closed to Noverre. His bitterness and rancour can be felt in every line. It was only natural that Gardel and Dauberval who were in charge for many years, should be opposed to his coming into the Opera, and should speak of him as of a foreigner.

At last in Vienna in 1772, Noverre had the effrontery to claim, in the programme of one of his ballets, that he had been the first to make the dancers wear buskins, and to stage noble and heroic stories.

For a man like Angiolini, the disciple and successor of Hilferding at two of the biggest theatres in Europe, with 27 years of theatrical activity behind him, this boast was hard to swallow. He therefore replied very politely and temperately, claiming for his master Hilferding the reform of choreography, the application of the three Aristotelian unities, and the division of the pantomime drama into acts or scenes.

It is not possible here to follow the course of the Noverre-Angiolini argument.

In the history of the ballet which I quoted at the beginning of this article, it is also stated that the example of Noverre was immediately followed by his emulators and rivals; at Venice and Milan by Angiolini and Vigano.

I have already spoken of Angiolini. As for Salvatore Vigano, his first contemporary critics, in Vienna, point out that he had exactly the opposite aims to those of Noverre. In fact, after his first experiments, Salvatore Vigano appeared in Europe as reviving the dance. Vigano did not consider miming tragedies to be dancing, as he explicitly stated in an interview with his biographer and critic, Carlo Ritorni.

"The difference between my ballets and those of Noverre is that he makes walking pantomimes while mine are danced". Elsewhere Carlo Ritorni explains admirably Vigano's conception of ballet.

"He thought, wisely", says Ritorni, "that a plot which has instrumental music as its inseparable companion cannot be reduced to a simple pantomime tragedy or to a silent recitation. Exactly to the contrary—the plot should become a silent song, with dances suggested by the orchestra, as sounds guide the voice in accord with the orchestral melody".

"In a word", he adds, "Vigano wanted to introduce into his dance drama the great ideal of the music drama".

In reality, the pantomime dear to Noverre was a menace to dancing at that time, even as a matter of principle. Again, according to his contemporaries, Vigano brought back into esteem those very *pas de deux*, turns and technique which had previously been abolished in the name of serious pantomime, and also those grotesques and comics which Hilferding had fought against with all his might as a matter of principle.

All this would be too long to explain in one article: I merely wanted to demonstrate in what way the history of the dance is being written. If one takes the trouble of checking the truth by facts and dates, it is no more than laughable.

GEORGES NOVERRE



Bouquet of the Month



This month's bouquet goes to Pamela May for her moving performance as the Red Queen in *Checkmate*. The role has not been so vividly interpreted since she danced it herself in the original production and it restores to the ballet some of its former tragic significance.

Critics in the "Gods"

On Sunday, September 16th, at the King's Theatre, Hammersmith, the Yugoslav Folk Dancers, Singers and Instrumentalists gave a colourful and dynamic performance of varied dances from their many provinces. The rhythmic power of these dances was spellbinding, and utterly fascinating and refreshing was the sight of a male *corps de ballet* composed of real men.

The performance, which was in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Yugoslav National Uprising, was prefaced by a tedious hour of political speechifying that seemed as much out of place as was the sight of Mr. Arnold L. Haskell sitting in the front row of the gallery. I wonder if it is a custom in Yugoslavia to put the critics in the "Gods"? Doubtless a practice that some of our West End managements might take pleasure in introducing. P.T.

Meeting of Ballet Clubs

The Annual General Meeting of the Association of Ballet Clubs was held at the R.A.D. on September 29th. The meeting was attended by representatives of ballet clubs from as far afield as Liverpool, Belfast, Newcastle, the Isle of Man and Southampton. After the meeting some fifty-four delegates went to the last night of the Sadler's Wells season at Covent Garden.

The Association exists to maintain contact between ballet clubs all over the country, to share lecture expenses, pool experience and information, etc. Particulars from Christine Greenfield, 20 Dean Road, London, N.W.2.

Grand Ballet at the Cambridge

THE first night of the de Cuevas Ballet, at the Cambridge Theatre, opened with a performance of *Les Sylphides* which I found almost impossible to watch, so distracting was the vulgar orchestration of the music, credited, if that is the word, to one Maurice Baron. This destroyed both the melodic line and the mood of the music, and should be dropped immediately. It was all the more distressing because, for once, the dancers seemed to realise that Fokine's choreography is expressive and not 'abstract'—indeed, the expressiveness was a trifle overdone—but what the dancers were trying to express had nothing to do with the gooey noises which accompanied their actions from the orchestra pit. Rosella Hightower, Harriet Toby and Helga Monson danced without particular distinction while George Zoritch looked a good partner but missed the romantic spirit of his role.

Neither *Night Shadow* nor *Les Sylphides* had any of the mystery which is their strength; perhaps this was due to first night nerves or to the size of the stage, which made dancers and sets huddle on each other. At such close quarters, Skibine, as the poet, was less effective than usual, while Marjorie Tallchief, as *La Somnambule*, danced with great virtuosity, but without that air of youthful, innocent sadness which made Pagava's interpretation so moving.

The soloists in the unfamiliar *pas de deux*, *Raymonda's Dream*, were Rosella Hightower and Skibine. They had a great reception; London was obviously glad to see them back, and Skibine looked far too aware of it, but neither was dancing well. There may have been physical reasons for this, or, again, it may be that they both, and Hightower more than Skibine, need air around them and the glamour of a big theatre to appear at their best.

After these disappointments, I was not particularly looking forward to *The Enchanted Mill*, which ended the programme; but, as it turned out, it was in this that we saw the best dancing of the evening, from Serge Golovine. His turns and elevation are particularly remarkable, and I look forward to seeing him in other roles during the Company's short season.

In this ballet, the *corps* were given an opportunity to show their talents. It was obvious that this sort of light-hearted affair suits the youngsters well. Their excellent work on the first night makes me believe that, when the Company has got used to the size of the stage, they will give some of the best all-round performances we have seen in London for some time.

FRANK JACKSON.



(TOP) ANDREA KARLSEN IN TRAGEDY OF VERONA
(BELOW) SERGE GOLOVINE

Photographs by Lido



SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE BALLET

COPPELIA AND CASSE NOISETTE ONCE AGAIN.

By JANET SINCLAIR

THOUGH *Coppelia* and *La Boutique Fantasque* are usually considered the most suitable for children of all ballets, yet paradoxically more than any other work in the current repertoire they call for completely adult treatment from the dancers. On the surface, *Coppelia* would appear the ideal choice for a young company: yet the adolescent dancer when tackling this type of ballet becomes not childlike, but childish: the ideal Swanildas of the past fifteen years are the mature artists Nemchinova, Danilova, de Valois, all three the essence of sophistication. It is perhaps for this reason that Fifield, a young dancer for whom the role of Swanilda would appear a "natural", is slightly less effective than the more mature Beriosova and Lane. However, it would be unfair from every angle to judge this revival on its first performance (September 4th) for the company was obviously hampered by unfamiliarity with the sets and by awareness of the formidable horde of critics, both English and American, in the audience. The opening performance, indeed, was a bitter disappointment, but by the third—the matinee of September 8th—the dancers had got into their swing and the ballet had some shape.

There is little remaining to be said about the choreography of *Coppelia* and one is left therefore with the individual performances. There can be no doubt that the company has benefited from the stabilisation of its ranks in preparation for the coming tour of Canada and the States: and the fact that this company, only five years old, can put on three presentable Swanildas shows that such stabilisation brings immense rewards. Fifield, who has thinned down becomingly in the past six months, gives a sound performance which is, if anything, a little too heartless even for Swanilda's complacency; the enchanting Beriosova has infinite poetry in her movements and though temperamentally unsuited to the character she convinces through sheer intelligence and stagecraft: while Maryon Lane, who for the past few seasons has seemed in danger of being overlooked, rings the bell with a performance of real charm, vivacity and attack. She is, too, a trifle more musically intuitive than the other two dancers in the role. If Miss Lane could work to improve her make-up there would seem to be nothing standing in her

way to prevent her becoming one of our really important dancers.

Blair dances well as Franz, though he has yet to substitute an adult nobility of bearing for the bounce and spontaneity that distinguished his work during his first seasons with the company, while Trecu succeeds both as dancer and in character—this role calls for great charm if it is to be bearable. David Poole wisely decided to try an unfashionable approach to the role of Dr. Coppelius, and this makes it all the more unfortunate that he overstepped the mark and portrayed the toy-maker with a heavy and doddering solemnity reminiscent of the early German silent films, and almost set one twitching in one's seat in sympathy. However, Stanley Holden is quite the best Dr. Coppelius the present writer has ever seen, and with this characterisation he assumes the mantle of the Chaplin of ballet. Throughout his mime is most subtly balanced between comedy and pathos; and ballet can provide very few moments anywhere nearly so touching as that when he watches Swanilda—after her preliminary capers—come fully to life. This moment could surely bring tears to the eyes of the most blasé old critic: never before in this ballet have one's sympathies been so strongly engaged by this pathetic old man who is so frequently presented as a tiresome old dodderer.

On the opening night the *corps de ballet* danced so badly that it is doubly pleasant to be able to report their competent performance by the third presentation: though one must state in passing that one wishes some responsible person could come down with a firm hand on the eccentricity of the hair styles affected by the young ladies appearing as "Dawn" in Act 3 and the Leader of the Mazurka in Act 1. Unfortunately the support offered to Swanilda by her "friends" was woefully inadequate. It is interesting to look back at a programme for the Vic-Wells Ballet when de Valois danced Swanilda in 1936, and to notice the six names set out in these supporting roles: Margot Fonteyn, Pamela May, Jill Gregory, Molly Brown, Laurel Martyn, Elizabeth Miller. Of the present crop, Stella Farrance alone possessed the necessary charm, ease and insouciance. One cannot but wonder why one or two of the prodigals lately returned from Covent Garden were not used to fill these important subsidiary parts.

Mr. Loudon Sainthill's costumes and sets, if unexciting, are passively pleasant: one regrets that the same cannot be said of Mr. Cecil Beaton's conception of the Kingdom of the Sweets. Each new costume that appears presents a fresh assault upon the senses, and even the dim poverty of the set cannot assuage the resulting visual indigestion. Mr. Beaton is not content to suggest flowers in his costumes for the "Valse des Fleurs": one gains the impression that he emptied the entire contents of a five acre garden over the tutus and on the heads of the unfortunate dancers. And what can one say of Frederick Ash-

ton's attempts to re-hash the choreography of *Casse Noisette*? It passes understanding why those who presumably witnessed the *début* of Balanchine's attempts to modernise *Firebird* should not have realised by now that new choreography imposed upon period music and fairy-tale cannot but result in chaos. Ashton did not succeed when he tried to refurbish one of his own ballets—*Apparitions*—less than fifteen years after its original production. From this melange of old and new the *pas de deux* (always the sole *raison d'être* for the preservation of this ballet) shines out like a diamond in a tawdry setting.

ADDED GLORY

NEW YORK CITY BALLET EARLY FALL SEASON OFFERS BOLENDER'S
THE MIRACULOUS MANDARIN AND BALANCHINE'S A LA FRANCAIX.

By ARTHUR TODD

THE eighth and most successful New York season of the New York City Ballet commenced its three week early fall engagement on September 4th before one of its most brilliant and enthusiastic audiences. The distinguished programme on-stage consisted of three Balanchine works—his beautiful *Serenade*, *Pas de Trois*, the superb *La Valse* and Jerome Robbins' controversial *The Cage*, which provides Nora Kaye with one of the most dramatic roles of her career. Despite its summer recess, the company appeared at the very top of its form, just as it was last June, and the *corps* seemed better than ever.

An unfortunate ankle injury prevented Tanaquil Le Clercq, who was to dance one of the Muses in *Apollo*, from doing any performance and also necessitated a postponement of this Balanchine revival to the next season. Instead, and probably at the very last minute, he composed a delightful, though minor, new ballet, *A La Francaix* which was set to Jean Francaix's *Serenade for Small Orchestra*. This is a frothy romp that includes one tennis player (André Eglevsky), a little flirt (Janet Reed), her two boy friends (Frank Hobi and Roy Tobias) and one Will-like Sylphide (Maria Tallchief) who strips down to a form-fitting red bathing suit in order to get her man. Though only a trifle when compared to Balanchine's master-works, it has great wit and charm and, more important, provides Eglevsky with the best role that he has yet had in the repertoire. Similarly, this work also displays a heretofore unsuspected comic gift in Maria Tallchief that bears watching and nurturing.

Miss Tallchief, as a matter of fact, has never appeared in finer form than she has this season. Her sheer technical virtuosity continues at the top of its range, but more important, at least for the growth of an artist, is the increasingly noticeable depth and range in her characterisations. This is especially evident in her performance in Tanaquil Le Clercq's role in *La Valse* and here Maria Tallchief thrilled many of us with her richly eloquent interpretation.

Melissa Hayden and Hugh Laing also covered themselves with glory in Todd Bolender's *The Miraculous Mandarin*, while Diana Adams came off more than credibly in Tanaquil Le Clercq's usual role in *Bourée Fantasque*. Mr. Bolender's new ballet, set to Bela Bartok's score and a libretto after Melchior Lengyel, starts directly off on the wrong foot by identifying the Place as "any city street, anywhere in the world" and immediately proceeds to give us a work that could only be termed Central European in style and concept. The by now somewhat out-moded plot is a brutal and surprisingly literal re-telling of the story of the street girl and the men she draws on so that her gang of accomplices can rob and, if necessary, murder. It also tells of the mandarin whose love for this prostitute is so deep that even death does not diminish his ardour until it has been requited. This present version is not censorable but neither does the work have any immediacy for us today.

The role of the prostitute seems to have been composed all in one key and the character is given no

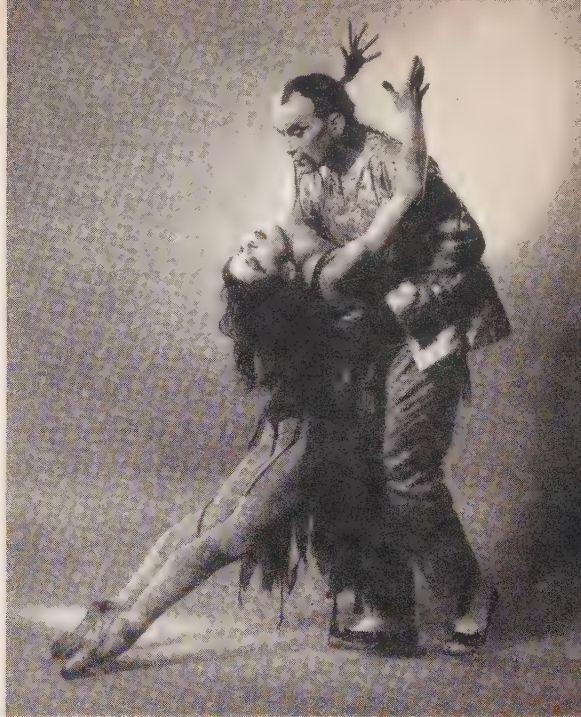
beginning, middle or climax as far as the choreography is concerned. Melissa Hayden is forced to perform this extremely demanding role at the very top of her physical range and, technically and dramatically, she succeeds brilliantly though one wishes that she had been given more to dance. As the Mandarin, Hugh Laing gives one of the most haunting and sensitive performances of his career, once more justifying the complaints of many who feel that Mr. Laing does not have nearly enough to do in the current repertory.

Nora Kaye has improved, if possible, in her performance in *The Cage* and has been making an indelible impression on even those who find fault with Mr. Robbin's ballet. Miss Kaye has also gained complete mastery of the girl's role in *The Age of Anxiety* and her performance in this ballet, along with those of Francisco Moncion and Hugh Laing, provides an even deeper insight into the characters in what many of us continue to feel is Jerome Robbin's finest work. Francisco Moncion, like Hugh Laing, is one of the most valuable assets in the male wing of the company and his intense and beautifully modulated performance in the title role of *The Prodigal Son* was, once more, one of the high spots of the season. Therefore, it seems too bad that this revival of Balanchine's has not had the audience success in New York that it had in London. At any event, Mr. Moncion makes each performance of it memorable.

Financially, this has been the most successful season in the New York City Ballet's history and this is doubly encouraging when one considers that in early September many New Yorkers have still not returned to town. Artistically, one might also say that the recent season has been the most rewarding in point of performances, with Patricia Wilde, Yvonne Mounsey and Michael Maule showing noteworthy progress. Mr. Maule, who has been with the company only a few seasons, has been especially in evidence because of his improving technique and greater powers of projection. And Frank Hobi, Janet Reed and Herbert Bliss continue among the chief delights in Ruthanna Boris' bright and bouncing *Cakewalk*.

Sadler's Wells Abroad

On November 9th Faber & Faber are publishing *Sadler's Wells Ballet Goes Abroad*, an account by Franklin White of the company's tour of the U.S.A. and Canada last year. The book is illustrated with 138 photographs, mostly by Bryan Ashbridge. Readers will remember that a shorter version of the story appeared originally in *Ballet Today*.



Photograph by Walter E. Owen

MELISSA HAYDEN AND HUGH LAING IN TODD BOLENDER'S
NEW BALLET THE MIRACULOUS MANDARIN

News from New York

The New York City Ballet's late fall season gets under way on November 13th, and one of the highlights of this five week's engagement is certain to be Balanchine's re-staging of *Swan Lake*, newly designed by Cecil Beaton, and with Maria Tallchief and André Eglevsky in the principal roles.

Meanwhile, Ballet Theatre's only New York engagement of the 1951-52 season opened Thursday, September 20th at the Metropolitan Opera House. Highlights of the New York season were the new version of *Princess Aurora* prepared by Bronislava Nijinska, the American premiere of Jean Babilée's *Til Eulenspiegel*, Mme. Nijinska's new ballet to the Schuman Piano Concerto and the revival of Michael Fokine's *Bluebeard* with John Kriza assuming the title role for the first time. Ballet Theatre's entire New York season will be reported at length in the next issue of *Ballet Today* as will be José Greco's appearance at the Shubert Theatre.

Rosario and Antonio

The two Spanish dancers, Rosario and Antonio, who received such good notices for their season at the Cambridge Theatre during the summer, are to return for a limited engagement starting on November 12th at the same theatre.

RAM GOPAL AND THE CLASSIC ART OF BHARATA NATYAM

By FERNAU HALL

IN recent years a great many people have enjoyed the clarity of line, rhythmic precision and emotional intensity of Ram Gopal's dancing, but few are aware that he is no less distinguished as a teacher. Often what appears to the audience as spontaneous and delightfully individual nuances in the performance of Bharata Natyam dances by members of his company have been carefully planned by Ram Gopal and polished during months of intensive rehearsal. In fact Ram Gopal's work as a Bharata Natyam teacher represents a creative achievement of some importance.

In the West we think of dance-teaching and choreography as entirely separate functions, in the same way that we make a sharp distinction between the composition of a piece of music and its interpretation. In the classical dancing and music of India there are no sharp distinctions of this character: the performer of a piece of music is also its composer, and the dance-guru (like the *maître de ballet* in Europe up to the 19th century) is both teacher and choreographer. The word "guru" is derived from a Sanskrit word meaning "grave, dignified", and this etymology gives some hint of the immense respect in which the guru is held in India—both by his pupils and by the general public.

Each great guru is a passionate defender of the classical tradition which has been handed on to him by his gurus, and strives to preserve every detail of it in all its purity; but when he puts together elements of the tradition into items of pure dance or dramatic dance (*abhinaya*) for individual pupils he is working as a creative artist. Here we have the essence of a true classical art: the innumerable strict rules ensure that the style keeps its purity, and at the same time the creative aspect of the work of the great gurus (and their best pupils) makes it possible for the dances to preserve their vitality and emotional truth.

The primary basis of Ram Gopal's Bharata Natyam style is the teaching of the great guru Vidwan Meenakshisundaram Pillay, of Pandanallur in Tanjore. This guru might be called the Cecchetti of India; alternatively, Cecchetti might be called the Meenakshisundaram Pillay of Europe. Both lay stress on vigour and clarity of movement, precision of line, exact control of the angle of effacement, boldness of attack, clarity of rhythm and phrasing,

nobility of carriage, and complete ease and assurance in even the most difficult *enchaînements*. Such styles are ideal as a technical foundation for great classical dancing; but certain great teachers and dancers have succeeded in adding warmth and subtlety to the Cecchetti style by combining with it elements from the old French style (as preserved in Russia by Legat and others), and in the same way Ram Gopal has succeeded in adding nuances of emotional expressiveness and individuality to the Meenakshisundaram style by bringing to it elements from the teaching of other distinguished gurus. A synthesis of this sort is extremely difficult to achieve: it is all too easy to water down the strength and angularity of the pure Tanjore style and so produce an effect of erotic sentimentality—a false "lyricism" and "femininity" which is quite foreign to the great Bharata Natyam tradition. (Degenerate styles of this sort are all too common in present-day India—particularly in Madras). Ram Gopal, in contrast, has shown admirable integrity and creative understanding in taking hints from several Bharata Natyam styles. No doubt he was helped in making this synthesis by his training in the other two classical styles (Kathakali and Kathak), for all three classical styles are ultimately derived from a common ancestor.

Watching Ram Gopal take a class is quite as exciting as any stage performance. He stands or sits facing his pupils, holding in his hands a pair of bamboo sticks and beating out the rhythms by knocking them together. Like many good teachers he is (to all appearances) completely ruthless, expecting the impossible from his pupils and giving them no respite until he gets it; nothing less than perfection is acceptable to him, and he keeps on striving for it with tireless ferocity, even if this means that the pupil repeats the same exercise a hundred times. Since the dancer has to think of a number of distinct and independent movements at the same time, he or she is very liable to go on making the same mistake; but Ram Gopal never loses patience, correcting the fault each time it appears, and (when necessary) demonstrating both the wrong and the right way of performing the movement. His demonstrations are a model of clarity; he stresses the qualities he wants almost to the point of exaggeration, so that the pupil can be in no doubt of what is required.

Some of the finer points of technique are astonishingly similar to those of ballet. Elbows, for example, must be kept lifted, shoulders must be pressed down, and the violent exertions of the legs and feet must have no uncontrolled reflection in the top half of the body. It is fascinating to see the sharp gain in vitality and effectiveness when the dancer achieves what Ram Gopal wants; the required quality is a spiritual one (as is the aesthetic quality in all Indian classical art), yet it is solid and real enough to cut with a knife. When it does emerge it lifts one out of one's seat—notwithstanding the fact that the dancer is in practise costume, dripping with perspiration, and without any of the glamour provided by stage lighting and make-up.

The essential characteristics of Bharata Natyam—its superhuman strength and angularity, its complex patterns of simultaneous movements—are so different from the popular European conception of Oriental dancing that the spectator must make a considerable effort of readjustment when he sees it for the first time. It is therefore greatly to Ram Gopal's credit that he has shown Western audiences the real thing, not a version watered down to suit "Western taste". He has wisely realised that "Western taste" is something infinitely varied and flexible which can be educated as well as debased. He has chosen to educate it, selecting (for the pure-dance items) those tempos, rhythms and modes most suitable for building a bridge between East and West, and (for the *padams*, or song-dances) the subjects most likely to be comprehensible to audiences who cannot follow the words of the songs. Now and again he takes our breath away by showing us something completely new and unexpected—such as a *jethisvaram* sparkling with arm movements so fast and staccato that the eye can hardly follow them; it is clear that the items he does show represent only a small part of the whole art of Bharata Natyam.

I see Ram Gopal as a kind of Hindu god, with a number of sharply contrasted aspects. Sometimes I like to think of him as a stern teacher, beating out the rhythms with controlled ferocity and driving his pupils until they almost drop from exhaustion: they are gluttons for punishment, and their enjoyment of this rough treatment is so patent that it communicates itself to the casual spectator. At other times I like to think of Ram Gopal as Krishna, stealing butter or pulling at girls' saris with a boyish, mischievous delight which is wholly irresistible. Both of these images are aspects of the essential Ram Gopal, and must both be understood if the stage performances by him and his company are to be fully appreciated.



Photograph by Paul Wilson

THE NY NORSK BALLET FROM NORWAY IN THEIR PRODUCTION
OF PETER AND THE WOLF

Petit to do Hans Andersen Ballets

It has now been decided that Roland Petit will arrange the ballets for the film about Hans Andersen in which Moira Shearer is to appear with Danny Kaye. It had previously been thought that George Balanchine would be responsible for the choreography but the commitments of the New York City Ballet's November season will prevent him going to Hollywood at that time. Moira Shearer is expected to leave for Hollywood early in November and will be accompanied by her husband Ludovic Kennedy.

Ballet Rambert

After their successful season at the King's Theatre, Hammersmith, the Ballet Rambert resumed their tour and during November will be at the following theatres:—

November 5th: New Theatre, Hull.

November 12th: Worthing.

November 19th: Arts Theatre, Cambridge.

November 26th: New Theatre, Northampton.

The next issue of *Ballet Today* will contain a full report of the company's recent Festival productions as seen at Hammersmith.

Balletomane's Bookshelf

A SEAT AT THE BALLET, by Caryl Brahms.
Evans Brothers Ltd.; 12/6 net.

Like the ageing spinster who, according to the comic postcards, anxiously peers under her bed before retiring, Miss Brahms lives in a state of Micawberish expectancy. True, her optimism—and her wit—may occasionally seem forced, indefensible, even a trifle embittered. But on the whole it wonderfully survives the longueurs and despairs produced by an ever-swelling flood of bad, uninspired productions and unwholesome dancing. Vigilance is all. For the miracle, you see, *is* possible; it has happened in the past, it may happen again at any moment. The space beneath the bed may, so to speak, suddenly be occupied by a vital entity of exquisite proportions, the figure of perfection in place of the conventional and obviously utility article.

A Seat at the Ballet is a justification of and an invitation to share Miss Brahms's vigil. As an introduction to the arts of the ballet it is the most engaging I have read, possibly because it is at once the most human and the least dogmatic. Quietly and informally (like a whisper as the lights dim) the book sets out its intentions in the first few pages. Labels, we are told, are to be affixed, themes developed, hidden excellences revealed. But, says the author, "I do not claim for a moment that I shall always be right and that you will always be wrong when we chance to differ in an estimate of the dancer or the danced . . . if, by having your attention drawn to certain aspects of the ballet, as seen from A.77 in the Stalls Circle you learn enough to prove me wrong, I shall consider that for once I have succeeded in my task." It is, as it were, ballet by nudges; education by a well-rounded and not too peremptory elbow.

Where Miss Brahms excels, I think, is in her fine sense of values and in the clarity of her perceptions. "Ballet," she remarks, "is a synthesis of movement to music before a designed scene and in a designed costume." At which we applaud in dutiful recognition of a first principle. And then without any warning: "Ballet is a very delightful but minor art." A fusillade before which I visualise thousands falling instantly. This statement is, in fact, the key to *A Seat at the Ballet* and perhaps to Miss Brahms's critical approach. Of its truth there can be no doubt—Noverre postulated it two hundred years ago. Nor does it affect the possibility of miracles, for miracles, obeying the laws of all phenomena, are subject to degree. Unfortunately, as Miss Brahms points out, minor miracles are the less certain of happening. "So

it will be seen that the combining of one independent art-form with another equally self-sufficient means of expression is not so much in aid of it, but indeed in aid of you. And its effect can only be to diminish the total gesture of both media." The components of perfection blending into a perfect whole may take place, if we are fortunate, once in ten years.

Miss Brahms surveys the entire range of contemporary ballet. Her observations are always pertinent and, if at all possible, sympathetic. I do not always agree with her findings, but there are some which I believe cannot be too loudly applauded. The present state of affairs at Covent Garden, for instance, receives some trenchant criticism which is wholly deserved. "Eleven months after its installation at the Opera House, the ballet was married off to the opera . . . like all the best young brides, it had a house of high tradition for its new home, and an insufficiency of finance for its upkeep. What followed? I can tell you in a word—tedium." Her estimate of Balanchine's work is particularly valuable as an antidote to the excessive adulation which it is fashionable to lavish upon it. And there are certainly many who will support her views on the revised version of *Firebird*—with sten-guns if necessary.

The book is marred somewhat by Miss Brahms's determined effort to maintain her reputation as a professional wit. Her humour is beginning to wear a fixed and slightly glassy-eyed grin. And I must protest strongly against that form of self-deprecation which assumes the form of exaggerated self-praise. We know Miss Brahms is a good critic—she has only herself to blame if we begin to suspect her own estimation.

ALAN STOREY.

International Ballet

During November International Ballet will continue its tour and will be seen at the following theatres:—

November 5th: Theatre Royal, Birmingham.

November 12th: Hippodrome, Bristol.

Nov. 19th, Nov. 26th: Streatham Hill Theatre.

BALLET VOCABULARY (Continued from page 23)

formed FERMÉ in which case it is usually begun from a closed position and resembles a GLISSADE. The right foot is thrown to the side as the dancer springs, travelling in that direction. As the right foot touches the ground, the left closes after it.

Billy ends his Soliloquy in *Billy the Kid* by performing a *jeté à la seconde fermé*, and the movement is repeated during the course of the ballet.

Ballet Vocabulary (8)

Compiled by LEO KERSLEY & JANET SINCLAIR
GLISSADE

A smooth travelling step gliding along the ground, beginning and ending with the feet together. The knees slightly bend before one leg is extended and the weight transferred on to it when the other closes across to it on bent knees. *Glissades* may also be performed on the tips of the toes.

On Giselle's first entrance, immediately after she has run back to her door for the first time, she takes Albrecht's arm and they perform four *glissades* before sitting down on the bench.

During the Solo of the Betrayed Girl before the curtain in *The Rake's Progress* the girl, almost immediately after she has put her embroidery down on the floor, performs six *glissades* on her toes.

JETÉ

There are four basic types of *jeté*, with many variations. (1) *GRAND jeté*; (2) *Jeté A LA SECONDE*; (3) *Jeté PASSE*; (4) *Jeté* from both feet.

(1) *GRAND JETÉ EN AVANT*. With the right leg raised in front, the dancer springs up and forward, landing on the right foot, the left leg held either straight or bent *EN ATTITUDE* behind him. This *jeté* is usually preceded by one or more steps to provide greater impetus, but this is not invariable.

Grand jeté can be performed *EN ARRIERE* by raising the foot behind and springing backwards on to it, but is comparatively rare as no impetus can be gained by a preparatory run.

To begin the coda of the *Black Swan pas de deux*, Siegfried enters in a series of *grands jetés en avant*, travelling round the stage.

On his entrance, the Spirit of the Rose stands on the window-sill and then does a *GLISSADE* followed by a *grand jeté en avant*, looking back and downwards to soften the leap.

Eccentric *grand jetés* are a feature of Mr. O'Reilly's drunken dance in *The Prospect Before Us*.

GRAND PAS DE CHAT. As *grand jeté en avant*, except that the knee thrown out in front is bent during the jump.

Paris begins his solo in *Helen of Troy* with two waltzing steps before stepping into a *grand pas de chat*.

COUPÉ JETÉ EN TOURNANT. A *coupé* under, executed while making three-quarters of a turn on bent legs, followed by a *grand jeté en avant*

The dancer's left leg is extended behind, and the

right slightly bent: the dancer *coupés*, i.e. brings the raised leg quickly in to replace the right which rises until the foot touches the left shin; simultaneously the dancer turns bending the knees still further. Then with the impetus thus gained the dancer performs a *jeté*, shooting the right leg high out in front and jumping straight on to it, while the back leg is either straight, or bent *EN ATTITUDE*.

At the end of the male solo in the *pas de trois* from *Swan Lake*, the man performs twelve *coupés jetés en tournant* round the stage.

The Bridegroom makes his entrance in *A Wedding Bouquet* performing a series of *coupés jeté en tournant* jumping with both legs bent in the air.

(2) JETÉ A LA SECONDE, or JETÉ DE COTÉ

To perform a series of these *jetés* the dancer begins with the right foot raised and touching the left calf. As he bends the left leg the right foot brushes out to the side and continues to rise as he jumps. On descending he lands on the right leg, drawing the left up to touch the other calf. A single *jeté à la seconde* may travel in the direction of the extended leg and may be commenced with both feet closed. *Jeté à la seconde* can also conclude with the left leg raised in *ATTITUDE* either in front or behind the dancer, or with the raised leg straight, in which case the step usually travels. *Jeté à la seconde* can also be per-

(Continued on page 22, col. 2)

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